

*Eighteenth-century secret history in translation: the case of 'The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians' and 'Histoire secrete de La reine Zarah, et des Zaraziens'*

Article

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**Eighteenth-century secret history in translation: the case of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* and *Histoire secrète de La reine Zarah, et des Zaraziens*.**

**Abstract**

In 1711, an anonymous author added a new preface and a new final part to two existing volumes of *Histoire secrète de La reine Zarah, et des Zaraziens*, a French translation of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* (1705). Previous scholarship on this well-known English text has neither addressed its French translations, nor analysed these additions. This essay reads the additions as a response to changes in British domestic politics and to political relations between Britain and France during the final phase of the War of Spanish Succession. It also, however, uses the relationship between *Queen Zarah* and *La reine Zarah* as a lens through which to explore the relationship between secret history and translation more broadly. It argues that translation conceived of as a movement or exchange between conditions or states, rather than just as a linguistic phenomenon, is a defining feature of secret history. The connections between translation and secret history offer new perspectives on eighteenth-century approaches towards genre, national and partisan identity, authorship and attribution.

**Keywords:** secret history, *roman à clef*, translation, politics, genre, authorship.

*The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians*, in common with other texts that call themselves secret histories, claims to expose secrets of state and bedchamber.<sup>1</sup> It takes the form of a *roman à clef* – a “key” narrative that obscures the identities of real-world referents using the thin veil of romance-style names.<sup>2</sup> *Queen Zarah* depicts the sexual depravity and political cunning of Zarah (Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough), who usurps the throne of the rightful monarch, Albania (Queen Anne), and subjects Albion (Britain) to tyrannical rule, supported by her husband, Hippolito (John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough), and her lover, Volpone (Sidney, Earl of Godolphin). In 1705, the year when it was first published, the Marlborough-Churchill alliance was in a position of political strength. Between them, this trio had power over access to the Queen (since Sarah Churchill was First Lady of the Bedchamber and the Queen’s chief confidante), the implementation of foreign policy (since John Churchill was Captain-General of the British forces, responsible for prosecuting the War of Spanish Succession against France), and the nation’s finances (since Sidney Godolphin was Lord Treasurer). *Queen Zarah*, then, takes aim at the heart of the political establishment, depicting a cynical and corrupt court

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<sup>1</sup> On secret history, see Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 469-505; Eve Tavor Bannet, “‘Secret History’: Or, Talebearing Inside and Outside the Secretorie,” in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), 367-88; Rebecca Bullard, *The Politics of Disclosure, 1674-1725: Secret History Narratives* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009); and Peter Burke, “The Rise of ‘Secret History,’” in *Changing Perceptions of the Public Sphere*, ed. Christian J. Emden and David Midgley (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 57-72.

<sup>2</sup> The tendency of “key”: narratives to conceal as well as to reveal is explored in Nicola Parsons, *Reading Gossip in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 48-55, and Freya Johnston, “Alexander Pope: Unlocking the Key,” *The Review of English Studies* 67 (2016): 897-913.

controlled, not by the legitimate monarch, but by the governors of backstairs and bedroom.

In 1705, *Queen Zarah* opposed the flow of popular sentiment towards the Marlboroughs; in 1711, however, the publication of a new edition of this secret history marked a turning of the political tide. A decisive Tory victory in the general election of 1710 reflected public support for the High Church clergyman, Henry Sacheverell, whom the Godolphin ministry had recently impeached for his inflammatory sermon, *The Perils of False Brethren* (1709). It also registered increasing public disaffection towards the ongoing War of Spanish Succession against France – a war which had begun in 1702 and which many Tories believed had been unnecessarily prolonged by the Marlboroughs' self-interest.<sup>3</sup> In this year the moderate Tory, Robert Harley, was appointed Lord Treasurer. Harley's ally Abigail Masham became Keeper of the Privy Purse, having already supplanted her cousin, Sarah Churchill, as Anne's chief confidante. By the end of the year, the Duke of Marlborough had been dismissed from his post and negotiations that would, in 1713, bring about the end of the war between Britain and France were well underway. The republication of *Queen Zarah* joined a wave of Tory publications, including most notably Delarivier Manley's *The New Atalantis* (1709) and Jonathan Swift's *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711), that sought to portray the Marlborough-Godolphin alliance as corrupt, greedy, and self-serving.

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<sup>3</sup> The strongest articulation of the anti-government position on foreign policy is Jonathan Swift, *The Conduct of the Allies* (London, 1711).

There are no substantial differences between the 1705 and the 1711 texts of *Queen Zarah*: changing political circumstances were enough to put a new complexion on this satire's angry denunciation of the recently fallen leaders. However, a new French edition of *Queen Zarah*, published in 1711 under the title *Histoire secrète de La reine Zarah, et des Zaraziens*, does make significant alternations and additions to the English version of this text in response to recent political developments in Britain. This anonymous French translation has not, as far as I am aware, received any sustained scholarly attention.<sup>4</sup> In this essay, I want to give an account of this new translation and to analyse its relationship with *Queen Zarah*. But I also want to use this previously unconsidered text as lens through which to explore a broader set of connections between translation, genre, and authorship during the early eighteenth century.

The argument of this essay is that the approach towards translation that we find in *Queen Zarah* / *La reine Zarah* is intrinsically connected to its specific genre: secret history. Secret history emerged during the later seventeenth century out of the close and often tense relationship between French and English political and literary cultures.<sup>5</sup> *Queen Zarah* / *La reine Zarah* was published at a particularly febrile moment, during which these two nations

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<sup>4</sup> The existence of a French (and a German) translation is noted on the website, [www.pierre-marteau.com](http://www.pierre-marteau.com), which observes that French editions of *Queen Zarah* "followed the original [English] 1705 edition - some offer the original preface, some alternative prefaces, some an appendix" (<http://pierre-marteau.com/library/e-1705-0003.html>, accessed 20 September 2017). There is no further analysis of the relationship between these translations.

<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Bullard, "Introduction: Reconsidering Secret History," in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660-1820*, ed. Rebecca Bullard and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1-14 (4-5); McKeon, 469-505; Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 42-66.

were actively engaged in armed conflict. This essay charts the ways in which these texts shape the conventions of secret history to support a particular, partisan cause: Tory opposition to the Marlborough-Godolphin alliance and, by extension, the promotion of peace between Britain and France. Underpinning this analysis is the conviction that secret history as a genre is related to but also distinct from other kinds of early eighteenth-century prose fiction, including the novel.

The particular nature of this text's engagement with its literary and political contexts facilitates a much broader exploration of the relationship between secret history and translation as both a practice and a concept. This essay argues that some of secret history's defining characteristics – for instance, its efforts to challenge received accounts of the past with new secret intelligence, and its tendency to turn real-world individuals into characters in a romance narrative – might be considered as forms of translation. It suggests that movement between languages should be seen as just one (albeit important) aspect of a genre that depends upon “transverse” reading practices: practices that require readers to move between old and new, the familiar and the strange, the domestic and the exotic.<sup>6</sup> This essay frames these reading practices using the concept of *translatio* – a form of cultural transfer and exchange that Mary Helen McMurrin identifies as central to the cross-Channel development of the early novel.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, it articulates the importance of

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<sup>6</sup> Bullard, “Reconsidering Secret History,” 7.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Helen McMurrin, “National or Transnational? The Eighteenth-Century Novel,” in *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*, ed. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 50-72 (51)

translation to secret history, and of secret history to our understanding of early eighteenth-century approaches towards translation. It also suggests that the connections between secret history and translation generate new perspectives on other, related areas of enquiry, including partisan and national identities, authorship and attribution.

### ***Histoire secrète de La reine Zarah, et des Zaraziens***

The first edition of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* is arranged in three sections. A preface, translated and appropriated without acknowledgement from a French text by Jean Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, forms a self-reflexive analysis of “little *Histories*” or “Historical Novels”, which thrill their readers with brisk, sexually charged plots.<sup>8</sup> The first volume charts Zarah’s rise to power through a series of political and sexual betrayals, while the second depicts the tyranny that she exercised over both the true queen, Albania, and the whole nation during her “reign.” The first French translation of this text, published in 1708, retains these three sections and offers a close rendering of the English original, including a re-translation of the preface. This version of the text was republished in 1711 and again in 1712.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Joseph Browne], *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians*, 2 vols (London, 1705), 1.A2r-v. References are to this edition. Neither *Queen Zarah* nor its sources gives titles for these long works, but it seems likely that they are referring to, for example, romances by Madeleine de Scudéry including *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*, 10 vols. (1648-53) and *Clélie* 10 vols. (1654-61).

<sup>9</sup> These texts are ESTC T36281 (1708), T62658 (1711) and T36283 (1712)



Beginning in 1711, however, an alternative version of this text began to circulate.<sup>10</sup> It retains the two volumes of the earlier French translation, but it replaces the original preface with a new one. This new preface informs us that “Comme les deux premières parties ne parlent des intrigues de Madame de Marlborough, que jusques vers l’année 1709. il m’est tombé entre les mains un petit manuscrit touchant le changement de fortune de cette Dame, qu’on trouvera à la suite de ce volume, & qui en composera la troisième partie.”<sup>11</sup>

Unlike the original preface, this new French one highlights the political, rather than the literary, context for the story that follows. It also draws attention to the fact that it contains a new third volume: a “suite”, or sequel, that brings the story of *Queen Zarah* up to date. Both the third part of *La reine Zarah* and the new preface are anonymous French originals rather than translations from English texts; neither of these additions appears ever to have been translated into English.

The new parts of *La reine Zarah* leave behind many of the romance conventions of the English original, adopting instead a more documentary, realist literary mode. There are fewer bedchamber intrigues in the third part than in the first two volumes, and more of an emphasis on bribery and financial corruption. There is a keen interest in detailing the time and place of the action: we are told that William Legge, Baron Dartmouth, became secretary of state on 24 June 1710 (227); Godolphin and Marlborough attended the Queen’s *levée* on the 23 February in the same year (232); at one point, we are even told

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<sup>10</sup> ESTC T36282 (1711). ESTC T191025 (1712) is a re-issue of the 1711 edition.

<sup>11</sup> *Histoire secrète de La reine Zarah* ([Oxford], 1711), A3v-A4r.

that “Ce fut le 28. Decembre sur les cinq heires du soir que le Duc entra dans Londres” (258). The French translation claims to give readers access to original documents, including letters putatively sent to and from the Duchess of Marlborough (235, 281). At the very end of the volume – indeed, after the printer had printed the terminal word, “Fin” – the preliminary articles of peace between Britain and France are printed in full (290-94), just as they had been recently in the periodical press.<sup>12</sup> This French translation also provides, for the first time, a key designed to decode the identities of characters depicted using romance-style names, or “noms travestis” (A2v) in the first two volumes; in the third volume it drops the use of “noms travestis” altogether, representing its cast of political actors under their own names.

The preface attributes these changes to the text’s efforts to translate and interpret British politics for a Francophone audience. It explains that “comme quelques-uns se trouvoient encore embarassez sur les autres noms travestis, l’Auteur fit glisser dans le public, la Clef ou l’explication de cette Histoire” (A2v). The third volume, however, gives a slightly different explanation for its decision to depict real-world characters under their own names: “Puisque la *Reine Zarah* est entierement démasquée, & que son Regne vient de finir par le changement du Ministere & la cassation du Parlement ... on ne travestira personne dans cette troisième Partie” (201-2). The change in style between the original English volumes and the new French edition of 1711 represents in

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<sup>12</sup> The *Daily Courant* first printed the preliminaries on 13 October 1711. The Tory journal, *The Examiner*, printed them in its issue for 20-27 December claiming that they had already been printed “in the *Daily Courant*, and other News Papers.”

literary terms a newfound political confidence. Gone are the obfuscations and indirections of romance which, it is implied, were necessary during the oppressive “reign” of Queen Zarah. A new literary mode is an indication of political liberty following the fall of the Marlborough-Godolphin alliance.

Although the style of the third volume of *La reine Zarah* is rather different from that of the two earlier parts, there are strong lines of partisan continuity between the new French sections and the original English ones. Indeed, *La reine Zarah* takes advantage of its status as French-language text – one ostensibly aimed, therefore, at a relatively uninformed audience – to (over-) explain British political history in very partial terms. The Whigs and the Tories, it tells its readers are “deux parties toujours opposees; & qui, perpetuellement mettent tout en pratique, pour se noircir & se détruire les uns et les autres” (202). But while the Whigs are “*Republicains*” (206) and descendants of regicides, the Tories claim their lineage from the previous century’s loyal royalists. *La reine Zarah* uses its status as a trans-national text to render explicit political ideas that remain latent in its English-language predecessor.

Indeed, in many ways *La reine Zarah* articulates a more coherent, ideologically driven version of early eighteenth-century Toryism than *Queen Zarah*, which largely depends on *ad hominem* attacks on particular individuals for its political force. As well as depicting the personal corruption and ambition of particular members of the Marlborough-Godolphin administration, *La reine Zarah* promotes distinctively Tory views on church and state. For instance, it defends at some length the controversial High Church polemicist Henry Sacheverell (209-10), and it accuses the Whig first earl of Sunderland of treason

for his part in the Revolution of 1688 (229), even as it acknowledges that James II exceeded the limits of “les Loix [qui] ont prescrites à la Royauté de la Grande Bretagne” (228). Its attack upon the Marlborough-Godolphin administration for usurping the Queen’s authority and artificially prolonging war with France for their own personal gain (209) is, then, situated within a much broader set of distinctively Tory ideological positions. Unlike *Queen Zarah*, which presents itself as a wholly negative attack on particular courtiers and the court culture that they facilitate, *La reine Zarah* offers a set of inter-connected views on the relationships between constitution, church, and foreign affairs.

Partisan continuity only partially explains, however, why the unidentified publisher(s) of the third part of *La reine Zarah* may have chosen to append this text to the first two parts of *Queen Zarah*. It would, after all, have been more economical to publish it as a separate – as at least one other publisher did in 1712, under the title *Suite de l’histoire secrète de la reine Zarah et des Zaraziens*.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, numerous editions of *La reine Zarah* published in 1712 and 1713 contain all three parts.<sup>14</sup> We might attribute this decision in part to the perceived popularity of the English text. “Le succès extraordinaire qu’ont eu les éditions Angloises, dont il s’est débité plus que quinze mille exemplaires, est un presage que celle qu’on donne aujourd’hui en François” (A4r), the revised preface of the 1711 French edition declares. But I want to suggest that those responsible for the revised French editions also hoped to capitalise on

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<sup>13</sup> ESTC T62657. The format and title page ornaments of this text strongly suggest that it was designed to be bound with a version of *La reine Zarah* that lacks the third part and the revised preface (ESTC T160929).

<sup>14</sup> ESTC T62657 (1712), N50745 (1712), T191025 (1713), T36284 (1713).

*Queen Zarah's* association with the broad genre of secret history. In order to understand why, we need to understand both the ways in which *La reine Zarah* engages with this generic tradition, and the ways in which this tradition had attempted to mediate political relations between France and Britain since the late seventeenth century.

*La reine Zarah* asserts that at the change of ministry in 1710 Britain had narrowly avoided a lucky escape from the limitless ambition of the Marlboroughs: “Il n’auroit manqué au Duc que le titre de Roi, comme il ne manquoit à la Duchesse que la qualité de Reine, si le changement de Ministere n’avoit renversé le fondement de ce nouvel Edifice, qui tendoit à mettre toute la Nation Britanique dans l’esclavage” (245-6). The idea that Britain has escaped “l’ esclavage” at the hands of Whig tyrants both recalls and neatly reverses the characteristic rhetoric of earlier Whig secret histories. Numerous secret histories published in the immediate wake of William III’s accession to the throne in 1688 revealed that the former monarchs, Charles II and James II, had sought to subject England to “Slavery and Popery” – synonyms, in this analysis – at the behest of the Pope and Louis XIV.<sup>15</sup> They claim to be products of a new era of political liberty under the Protestant monarchs, William and Mary, contrasting “the Furberies and Tyranny” of Charles II and James II with “the Integrity, Sincerity, and Sweetness of Their present Majesties Reign.”<sup>16</sup> As the

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<sup>15</sup> [John Phillips], *The Secret History of the Reigns of K. Charles II and K. James II* (London, 1690), 26, 34, 36, 42, 52, 66, 68, 70, 156; *The Safety of France to Monsieur the Dauphin. Or the Secret History of the French King* (London, 1690), 149; *The Secret History of the Confederacy* (London, 1693), 8, 135.

<sup>16</sup> [Phillips], A2v.

Tory administration under Robert Harley sought an end to the War of Spanish Succession in the second decade of the eighteenth century, Whig secret historians once more began to warn against a renewed Anglo-French threat to political liberty using terms that evoked their literary forbears. In his *Secret History of Europe* (1712), for instance, John Oldmixon expresses a desire to “call to our Remembrance what the Men were, and what the Principles, that brought Europe to the Brink of Slavery, by advancing the Power of France.”<sup>17</sup>

*La reine Zarah*’s celebration of the change of ministry in 1710 uses rhetoric characteristic of Whig secret histories, but it puts that rhetoric to new use: to attack the Whig proponents of continued war with France. Rather than depicting France as a threat to British political liberty, it locates the real danger in the home-grown tyrants who seek to prolong armed combat for their own mercenary ends. Although it differs in style from the first two parts of *Queen Zarah*, the third part of *La reine Zarah* still seeks to associate itself with the genre to which this text belongs. It forms part of a group of Tory texts, including Manley’s *New Atalantis*, the anonymous *Secret History of Arlus and Odolphus* (1710), and Swift’s *Conduct of the Allies*, that sought to reverse the association of secret history with Whig francophobia during the final phase of the War of Spanish Succession.<sup>18</sup> It is, as far as I am aware, the only text originally written in French to do so – but its discovery must open up the possibility that other French-language writers sought to engage closely with

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<sup>17</sup> John Oldmixon, *The Secret History of Europe* (London, 1712), A2r.

<sup>18</sup> Bullard, *Politics*, 9, 85-110.

Tory opinion in particular, and the nuances of British political culture more generally, during a period characterised by the “rage of party.”

### **Transnational secret history**

*La reine Zarah* offers a starting point for thinking about secret history as a transnational literary form. The interconnectedness of eighteenth-century French and British literary culture has long been recognised, of course, and in recent years numerous scholars have emphasised the transnational aspects of eighteenth-century fiction in particular.<sup>19</sup> Most of these analyses have focused on a loosely affiliated set of texts gathered under the capacious generic banner of “the novel.” Noting that “the diversity of prose fictions in the eighteenth century defies a clear sense of a genre with defining formal features,” Mary Helen McMurrin suggests that interlinguistic and intercultural transfer between France and England “may have been a constitutive element of the novel’s definition because what fictions had in common was the ability to speak across, to change form and language without obvious rules, much less impediments, resistance, or loss.”<sup>20</sup> While the inter-permeability of Francophone and Anglophone literature provides an important context for *Queen Zarah* and *La reine Zarah*, however, these two texts also suggest that secret history adopts an approach towards the practice of writing across and

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<sup>19</sup> Cohen and Dever; Jennifer Birkett (“Prose Fiction: Courtly and Popular Romance,” in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Volume 3: 1660-1790*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 339-48); Gillian Dow, “Translation, Cross-Channel Exchanges and the Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century,” *Literature Compass*, 11 (2014): 691-702; Mary Helen McMurrin, *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> McMurrin, “National or Transnational?” 57.

between literary and political cultures that is distinct from other, less clearly defined, forms of prose fiction. What we find in secret history is not so much a “nation-blind transfer” between texts that translate and adapt one another freely without noticing or acknowledging a shift in language and culture,<sup>21</sup> but rather a self-conscious approach towards the ways in which literary texts might mediate and negotiate intersecting transnational, partisan affiliations.

Although it was almost certainly printed in the Low Countries, *La reine Zarah* claims on its title page to have been published “Avec Approbation de la Nation Britannique” at Oxford. The specific city chosen as the notional place of publication gestures towards the new ministry under Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, as well a famously Tory university. In highlighting its connection to Britain, however, *La reine Zarah* develops a practice found in many earlier French *histoires secrètes*. *Histoire secrète des règnes des Rois Charles II. et Jaques II* (1690), for instance, asserts that it was “traduit de l’Anglois”, while *Histoire secrette de la Duchesse de Portsmouth* (1690) advertises the fact that it was “traduit de la Copie Angloise” and “imprimée à Londres” by the well-known Whig publisher, Richard Baldwin. Even when they do not claim to have been translated from English texts or printed in England, *histoires secrètes* often focus on the English Court, whether (as in the texts just mentioned) under the Stuart kings in England or, in the case of texts like *La cour de Saint-Germain, ou, les intrigues galantes du roy et de la reine d’Angleterre, depuis leur séjour en France* (1695) and *Histoire secrette du voyage de Jacques II. à Calais pour passer*

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<sup>21</sup> McMurrin, *Spread of Novels*, 20.



*en Angleterre* (1696), the Jacobite court in exile. The generic tag *histoire secrète/secrette* became popular in France during the 1690s – the decade following the Revolution that brought William III to the English throne.<sup>22</sup> Since most of the texts that describe themselves in this way were clandestine publications – “forbidden bestsellers,” to use Robert Darnton’s phrase – association with England might be read as an attempt to “import,” at a symbolic level at least, English political liberty into absolutist France.<sup>23</sup> By asserting its connections to Britain, then, *La reine Zarah* appropriates familiar bibliographical conventions. It does so, however, in order to challenge, rather than to affirm, the association between secret history and oppositional Whig politics.

So far, *La reine Zarah* appears to be a text that translates British politics for a French-speaking audience in a rather unusual way – by appropriating a Whig literary form to validate a Tory interpretation of the recent political past. The case is, however, rather more complex than this, and its complexities derive from this text’s transnational characteristics. Although the third volume of *La reine Zarah* is a French original, the first two volumes are translated from *Queen Zarah*, a text in English. *Queen Zarah* is not, however, straightforwardly “English,” not least because it draws upon multiple French sources. The English preface to this secret history is a translation of part of Bellegarde’s *Lettres curieuses de littérature, et de morale* (1702), which is itself a paraphrase of an

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<sup>22</sup> Allison Stedman, “Secret History in Pre-Revolutionary France,” in Bullard and Carnell, 205-215 (206).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

earlier French work: *Sentimens sur les lettres et sur l'histoire* (1683).<sup>24</sup> Passages in the main body of the narrative are transcribed verbatim and without acknowledgement from *Hattige* (1680), which is an English translation of Sébastien Brémond's secret history, *Hattigé ou, Les amours du roy de Tamaran* (1676).<sup>25</sup> *Hattigé*, a *roman à clef*, is French in style and language, but English in subject matter: it exposes the relationship between Charles II and his mistress, Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland, under the guise of an oriental romance tale.<sup>26</sup> What we find in *La reine Zarah* is, then, a text that embodies multiple bi-directional channel crossings. It is in part an original French text and in part a French translation of an English text – an English text that incorporates both original translations of French texts (that draw on other French texts) and also borrowed passages from an English translation of a French text. Between them, *La reine Zarah* and *Queen Zarah* exemplify McMurran's persuasive argument that "the contact between France and Britain cannot be properly described as the simple intersection of two distinct others but was a more fluid interaction based on a history of cultural intimacy."<sup>27</sup>

McMurran's analysis addresses the novel as a broad and fluid genre, but I want to suggest that secret history has a particular role to play in this "history of cultural intimacy" that has yet to be fully recognised. Secret history is a

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<sup>24</sup> John L. Sutton, "The Source of Mrs. Manley's Preface to *Queen Zarah*," *Modern Philology* 82, no. 2 (1984): 167-172; see also Rachel Carnell, "More Borrowing from Bellegarde in Delarivier Manley's *Queen Zarah and the Zarazians*," *Notes and Queries* 51, no. 4 (2004): 377-379.

<sup>25</sup> Ruth Herman, "Similarities between Delarivier Manley's *Secret History of Queen Zarah* and the English translation of *Hattigé*," *Notes and Queries* 47, no. 2 (2000): 193-196

<sup>26</sup> Erin Keating, "In the Bedroom of the King: Affective Politics in the Restoration Secret History," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 58-82.

<sup>27</sup> McMurran, "National or Transnational?" 51

hybrid genre that blends aspects of French and English literary traditions, including French amatory romance, such as Bussy-Rabutin's *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules* (1665), and English oppositional propaganda, such as *The Kings Cabinet Opened* (1645).<sup>28</sup> French secret histories, as we have seen, often assert their connections with Britain, but English secret histories also frequently claim to have been translated from the French.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, one English secret history – *The Amours of Messalina* (1689) – claims that it was translated from the French, while the French version of this text affirms that it was translated from the English.<sup>30</sup> Secret histories in both languages focus on tangible, political connections between France and Britain: the Jacobite court in exile at Saint-Germain-en-Laye; Charles II's French mistress, Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth; the close relationship between the Stuart and Bourbon courts, and the antipathy between Louis XIV and William III. They assert the inextricability of French and British political culture whether they decry French influence on British politics (as do most Whig secret histories) or affirm the necessity of a peace between Britain and France (as does *La reine Zarah*).

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<sup>28</sup> Bullard, "Reconsidering Secret History," 4-5; McKeon, 469-505; Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740*. On secret history and the tradition of oppositional English politics, see Annabel Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 153-281.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, *The Court at St Germain; or the Secret History of James II* (London, 1695) and *The Cabinet Open'd, or, The Secret History of the Amours of Madam de Maintenon, with the French King* (London, 1695).

<sup>30</sup> *Les Amours de Messaline, Cy-devant Reine de l'Isle d'Albion* ([Cologne], 1689) claims on its title page to have been "corrigée sur l'Original Anglois", while *The Amours of Messalina, Late Queen of Albion* (London, 1689) begins with a preface entitled "The Translator to the Reader" (A3r-v) which claims that this English text was translated from the French. A Dutch translation of the same year (*De Minnereye van Messalina* (Haarlem, 1689)) claims to be "Naar de Copie van London" on its title page.

Julie Candler Hayes suggests that the eighteenth-century novel “constru[es] national identity in terms of the cross-Channel other.”<sup>31</sup> But secret history constructs a kind of partisan transnationalism in which political affiliation operates across territorial borders. The “other” in secret history is not a nation state, but a set of political beliefs. Opponents of the Bourbon court on both sides of the Channel, in both languages, use literary devices including the generic conventions of secret history and translation to affirm ideological bonds that cross borders. More unusually, *La reine Zarah* aligns itself with *Queen Zarah* to become a French Tory text. When it comes to secret history, adjectives like “French” and “English” which might appear to indicate a sense of coherent national identity in fact refer only to the language in which a text is written, not to a broader form of cultural belonging. And language, as they also demonstrate, is always open to change through translation.

### **Secret history and translation**

Translation is a term that can be construed narrowly and broadly, and both narrow and broad senses are important for understanding the contribution that *Queen Zarah* and *La reine Zarah* make to eighteenth-century transnational literary culture. Narrowly conceived, translation is a linguistic phenomenon: it involves turning or rendering a text from one language into another.

Translation also, however, has a broader sense: transfer, or a process of transfer, from one state or condition to another. We might say that changes in political

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<sup>31</sup> Julie Candler Hayes, *Translation, Subjectivity, and Culture in France and England, 1600-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 16.

circumstances between 1705 and 1711 “translate” the oppositional secret history, *Queen Zarah*, into a pro-government text. When it lifts passages of *Hattige* verbatim, *Queen Zarah* “translates” them by incorporating them into a new narrative, for new political circumstances. And when it offers readers fictionalised narratives about real-world figures under the guise of romance names, *Queen Zarah* “translates” those individuals into characters in a *roman à clef*. McMurran refers to this “cultural and literary dynamic” as *translatio* – a term that she borrows from a set interrelated medieval concepts including the movement of souls from earth to heaven, the transfer of power from one empire to another (*translatio imperii*), and cultural exchange through practices including translation, imitation, and adaptation (*translatio studii*).<sup>32</sup> *Translatio* offers a framework within which we might situate the broader relationship between secret history and translation. It allows us to see that secret history is a genre defined by the acts of translation that it requires of its readers. The linguistic process that turns *Queen Zarah* into *La reine Zarah* is one aspect of a much broader, self-conscious awareness of the centrality of translation to secret history a form of literary practice.

*Queen Zarah* and *La reine Zarah* draw attention to the acts of translation that secret history – especially secret history in the form of a *roman à clef* – demands of its readers. The preface to the revised 1711 edition of *La reine Zarah* advertises the fact that it contains a key to the characters in the first two parts of *Queen Zarah* for the benefit of French readers, “qui ne connoissent pas assez la

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<sup>32</sup> McMurran, “National or Transnational?” 51

carte de la Cour d'Angleterre, pour développer tous les noms énigmatiques que l'Auteur y a placé" (A3r). The verb "développer" indicates the dynamism of reading *à clef*. Although the writer of the French preface suggests that the key is designed to make the reading process easier for readers outside Britain, it draws attention to an aspect of all *romans à clef*, not just those who are reading a foreign text. Reading *à clef* is never a simple act of decoding. Sometimes keys generate confusion through unclear or multiple references. In the published key to the 1711 *La reine Zarah*, for instance, the character called "Foeski" in the English text is named as *Foëshi*, and "translated" as "Daniel du Toé, grand Satiriste" (A5r) – who might be more familiar to us as Daniel Defoe. A character called *Macaius* is referred to only as "— Autre Membre du Parlement" (A5v). Even if a reader learns the names of the historical people to whom particular characters refer, hermeneutic enquiry is still required. *Romans à clef* implicitly invite their readers to "translate" situations depicted in the narrative, which are often fictional or semi-fictional, into a form of political ideology that becomes a lens through which to read the recent past.<sup>33</sup> This lens, however, is often cloudy, distorting, and vulnerable to breakage.

Indeed, the first, English edition of *Queen Zarah* draws attention to the instability of both translation and reading *à clef* when it gives its full title as *The Secret History of Queen ZARAH, AND THE Zarazians; BEING A Looking-glass for ----- in the Kingdom of ALBIGION.*" The name Zarah here "translates" the historical person Sarah Churchill into a character from an oriental tale. Zarah

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<sup>33</sup> On the complexities of reading *à clef*, see David Brewer, "Secret History and Allegory" in Bullard and Carnell, 60-73; Parsons, 48-55; and Johnston.

(with no final “h”) is, in fact, the name of a minor character – a slave and a bawd – in *Hattigé*, which is set in Turkey. The orientalist connotations of the names Zarah and the Zarazians contrast with the British etymological roots of “Albigion,” the Kingdom in which this narrative is putatively set. Albigion gestures towards the Scottish heritage of the Stuart monarchs (Alba is the Scottish Gaelic word for Scotland, and the character who represents the Stuart Queen Anne in this narrative is called Albania). It also joins two very common words derived from Old and Middle English – “all” and “big” – in a way that is perhaps designed to imply that the faction called the Zarazians does not stand for the whole country, and is both small and somehow foreign.<sup>34</sup> At an etymological level, then, the title page gestures towards linguistic diversity and the fracturing effect of translation. But this title page also “translates” the historical person Sarah Churchill in another way when it describes this secret history as a “Looking-Glass for -----.”<sup>35</sup> Translating “Zarah” into a series of blanks places a second layer of obscurity over Sarah Churchill. The metaphor of the looking glass indicates not clarity of representation, but the distortion created by a reflected image. Jonathan Swift’s contemporary observation that satire is “a sort of Glass wherein Beholders do generally discover every body’s Face but their Own” may be designed to indict satire’s wilful (mis)readers, but

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<sup>34</sup> That the name Albigion has both English and Scottish roots is significant at a time when full political union was a subject of heated political discussion.

<sup>35</sup> The eight blanks of the surname here perhaps represent “Jennings,” Sarah Churchill’s birth name.

the vehicle of Swift's chosen metaphor – the glass – also hints at the distorting effect that texts have upon their subjects.<sup>36</sup>

The title page of the 1705 English edition of *Queen Zarah* not only highlights the connections between translation and reading *à clef*, but it does so by alluding to the close connections between these practices and the tradition of secret history. Between two ruled lines, it asserts that this text was “Faithfully Translated from the *Italian Copy* now lodg’d in the *Vatican* at *Rome*, and never before Printed in any Language.” At one level, this explicit reference to translation is part of *Queen Zarah*’s practice of romance-inspired exoticisation, designed to defamiliarise British politics. At another level, however, it gestures towards modern secret history’s classical antecedent: Procopius’s *Anekdotia* (i.e. “unpublished [things]”), a scandalous sixth-century account of the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora which revised and undermined Procopius’s own more orthodox, eight-volume *History of the Wars of Justinian*. Like *Queen Zarah*, *Anekdotia* emerged from the Vatican library. Having remained undiscovered for upwards of a thousand years, the manuscript was discovered and translated in 1623 into Latin as *Arcana historia* or secret history, thus bringing this phrase – which of course *Queen Zarah* adopts – into European literature for the first time. When *Queen Zarah* claims that it was “never before Printed in any Language,” it perhaps recalls the fact that Procopius’s Greek text appeared in Latin (1623), French (1669) and English (1674) editions over the course of the seventeenth century –

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<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, ed. Marcus Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 142.



all of these versions redacted to remove the more scandalous aspects of Procopius's original.<sup>37</sup> As it evokes *Anekdotia*, *Queen Zarah* reminds us that translation and secret history create, not stable reflections of coherent originals, but a series of multiple, fractured images that supplement, challenge, and undermine one another.

### Translation, authorship and attribution

The kind of fracturing or dislocation that we find in *Queen Zarah / La reine Zarah*'s reflections on translation and genre are also evident in its approach towards authorship and attribution. The first English edition of *Queen Zarah* was published anonymously in 1705. The next extant English edition, published in 1711, bears on its title page the phrase "By Way of Appendix to the New *Atlantis*" – apparently an allusion to Delarivier Manley's *Secret memoirs and manners of several persons of quality, of both sexes. From the New Atalantis, an island in the Mediteranean* (1709), better known (in its own time and ours) as *The New Atalantis*. In the same year as this new English edition was published, however, the revised French edition of *La reine Zarah* makes another, albeit rather tentative attribution. In a discussion of the new third volume that this text appends to the existing text, the anonymous author of the preface observes:

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<sup>37</sup> Bullard, *Politics*, 30-35.

L'Auteur de cet Ouvrage ne m'est point connu; quelques-uns l'attribuent au Docteur Sacheverell, Ministre Anglican, dont le nom a fait tant de bruit dans toute l'Europe...; d'autres disent que c'est la production d'un homme d'une beaucoup plus haute naissance, c'est à-dire, d'un des premiers Seigneurs d'Angleterre. (A2r)

In 1711, then, connections are drawn between different parts of *Queen Zarah/ La reine Zarah* and two very different Tory writers: the satirist Delarivier Manley and the High Church controversialist, Henry Sacheverell. What might we make of these attributions, and what connections do they suggest between translation, secret history, and authorship?

One way of interpreting these apparent attributions is to take them literally. *Queen Zarah* was, in fact, for many years attributed to Manley and included in editions of her works.<sup>38</sup> In an article published in 2004, however, Alan Downie argued very convincingly that this attribution was mistaken, and that the most likely candidate for authorship of *Queen Zarah* is another, less well known, Tory polemicist called Joseph Browne.<sup>39</sup> Although there has been no scholarly discussion of the idea that Henry Sacheverell may have authored

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<sup>38</sup> Patricia Köster included *Queen Zarah* in *The Novels of Mary Delarivière Manley*, 2 vols (Gainsville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971), though she noted that "there are certain anomalies which cast doubt on the authorship" (1:x). It is attributed to Manley in other recent editions, including *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, vol. 1, ed. Ruth Herman and Rachel Carnell (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005); *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660-1730, An Anthology*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 45-80; and *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians*, ed. Malcolm J. Boss (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972).

<sup>39</sup> J. A. Downie, 'What if Delarivier Manley Did Not Write *The Secret History of Queen Zarah*?', *The Library* 5, no. 3 (2004): 247-264.

the third volume of *La reine Zarah*, this claim might be greeted with a degree of scepticism similar to that with which Downie approaches the attribution of *Queen Zarah* to Manley. *La reine Zarah* is not mentioned in Francis Falconer Madan's *Critical Bibliography of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*.<sup>40</sup> Sacheverell's writing style (described by W. A. Speck as "tortuous prose") is quite unlike that of the third part of *La reine Zarah*, and there is no evidence that Sacheverell ever wrote in French.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the attribution of the third part of *La reine Zarah* to Sacheverell is so implausible at a literal level that we should, I suggest, exercise considerable scepticism towards the idea that it is meant to be taken literally at all. And if that is the case in relation to *La reine Zarah*, then it may also be true of the apparent attribution of *Queen Zarah* to Delarivier Manley.

Instead of attempting to situate each of these texts as the products of particular author figures, we might more productively consider them in relation to one another and the broader literary and political cultures of which they form part. The tentative formulation of each apparent attribution encourages this approach: "quelques-uns l'attribuent au Docteur Sacheverell," we are told in *La reine Zarah*, while the circumlocutory expression, "By Way of Appendix to the *New Atlantis*," which lacks a participle (published? written?), suggests a degree of indeterminacy in the relationship between Manley's text and *Queen Zarah*. "Docteur Sacheverell" and the author of *The New Atalantis* in these

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<sup>40</sup> Francis Falconer Madan, *A Critical Bibliography of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, ed. W. A. Speck (Lawrence, Kansas : University of Kansas Libraries, 1978).

<sup>41</sup> W. A. Speck, "Sacheverell, Henry (bap. 1674, d. 1724)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/article/24440>, accessed 21 March 2017]

formulations are not so much particular people as representatives of a hugely popular and highly successful Tory print culture: a culture in which *Queen Zarah* and *La reine Zarah* bid to participate. Indeed, other Tory *romans à clef* published towards the end of the War of Spanish Succession claim a similar relationship with Manley's influential text in particular. The title pages of several of John Arbuthnot's 1712 *John Bull* pamphlets, for instance, claim that these texts were "Publish'd ... by the Author of the *New Atalantis*."<sup>42</sup> These texts position themselves as part of a network forged both through generic affiliation – all of these texts are connected to the related generic traditions of secret history and *roman à clef* – and also through partisan allegiance, since all are Tory texts. These lateral connections between texts prove much more significant in approaching both particular texts and early eighteenth century political and literary culture, than a more positivistic approach towards questions of authorship.

There is an intrinsic connection between acts of translation, secret history, and a sceptical approach towards authorship. Lawrence Venuti argues that "translation threatens the transcendental author because it submits his text to the infiltration of other discourses that are not bourgeois, individualistic, transparent."<sup>43</sup> Venuti's analysis focuses on translation as a strictly linguistic phenomenon. A broader interpretation of translation, or *translatio*, poses, if anything, an even greater challenge to the idea of the

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<sup>42</sup> John Arbuthnot, *John Bull Still in His Senses* (London, 1712), title page. See also *An Appendix to John Bull Still in His Senses* (London, 1712), title page.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995; 2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2008), 160.

“transcendental author.” *Queen Zarah*, after all, translates and incorporates without acknowledgement sections Morvan de Bellegarde’s *Lettres curieuses* and, via an English translation, does the same to Brémond’s *Hattigé*.<sup>44</sup> When it appropriates and adds to *Queen Zarah*, *La reine Zarah* extends the practice of its source text. These texts are as iconoclastic towards what Venuti terms the “transcendental author” as they are towards political authority. They always exist in relation to one another, dependent on the existence of other texts for their full rhetorical force. The polemical power of secret history depends on its revisions of more orthodox narratives. As one practitioner of this genre put it, secret history is a “*Supplemental Part*, as well for the detecting of past Falsities, as for the perfecting of past Discoveries.”<sup>45</sup> In a similar manner, translated texts occupy what Venuti describes as “an equivocal relationship to the foreign text, never quite faithful, always somewhat free, never establishing an identity, always a lack and a supplement.”<sup>46</sup> Identifying the person who may actually have sat down with a pen and written these texts is not as important for understanding the way they operate as cultural artefacts as acknowledging the complex textual imbrication of which they form part.

## Conclusion

The particular prompt for this essay was the discovery of a French translation of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* that had not previously

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<sup>44</sup> Sutton; Carnell, “More Borrowing;” Herman.

<sup>45</sup> David Jones, *The Secret History of White-hall from the Restoration of Charles II down to the Abdication of the Late K. James* (London, 1697; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn 1717), vi.

<sup>46</sup> Venuti, 57.

received close, scholarly attention. The French text, *La reine Zarah*, provides an important witness to the reception of *Queen Zarah* in early eighteenth-century Europe, and especially to the ways in which writers in France and Britain responded to the change of ministry in 1710 and the closing stages of the War of Spanish Succession. It is even more significant, however, for what it suggests about the relationship between secret history and the practice of translation. It reveals that texts like *Queen Zarah/ La reine Zarah* construct a form of partisan transnationalism that crosses borders and languages. Through this process, linguistic labels like “French” and “English” become decoupled from national identity, which is fractured under the pressure of competing partisan affiliations. It highlights the fact that translation is more than just a linguistic phenomenon; as it supplements and revises orthodox narratives of the past with new intelligence, and as it turns real-world figures into characters in a romance, secret history engages in acts of translation. Secret history’s investment in “transverse” reading practices has a wider cultural impact, eliciting in particular a highly sceptical approach towards the concept of authorship. Secret history and the literary and political culture in which it participates are defined by acts of translation, regardless of linguistic points of departure and arrival.